

John 14:19

“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”

Because I live - You will live

The words of our text were spoken when things looked gloomy and on a night when death was staunching - for these words were spoken on the night that Jesus was betrayed and just before he entered upon his great suffering. This suffering culminated in his crucifixion and death. Therefore these words are fitting for us to consider today when with heavy heart we lay to rest our departed brother in the faith.

I

These words impress us as very daring and contain a challenge.

The world in which Jesus spoke these words was a world in which death ruled supreme. Of the millions of people living on earth not one could escape death - everyone must die. Some might live a few years longer than others but ultimately the report would go out - *“And he died.”*

It had not always been this way. When God created the world he filled it - not with dying people but with living ones. When he formed Adam out of the dust he breathed into his nostrils the

breath of life. There was life - abundant, vigorous life that was not threatened by any germ of disease or death.

What brought about the change? In his original estate Adam was connected by faith with God. God is life and the source of all life. As long as a person through faith is connected with God there is a constant stream of life flowing from God. But Adam cut himself off from God by sin. As soon as any person severs the connection with God – then they are cut off from the fountain of life and doomed to die for there is no life outside of God.

Adam listened to Satan the tempter and ate the forbidden fruit and this severed his union with God. Adam did not commit a grave crime such as murder or robbery; he did not use foul language to blaspheme God – and yet he severed his union with God, the Fountain of life by disobeying him. Death entered into the world and began its tyrannical rule. Since Adam, every man must die and from this there is no escape.

In the middle of this situation and in defiance of death, Jesus said: “... I live.” **John 14:19** With these words he hurled a challenge at death and dared death to kill him if that were possible. Jesus said in effect: *“Do your worst. You can’t kill me. I live.”*

Death took up the challenge. Jesus went out to the Garden of Gethsemane and there death attacked him. Jesus wrestled with death. “... and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the

ground.” Luke 22:44 The death struggle was bitter but Jesus made good his challenge and it could not overpower him.

But this was only the beginning. On the next day Jesus was nailed to the cross and there death and hell assailed him. In his hell-agony he exclaimed: **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Matthew 24:46** But even so he was not overpowered and made good his challenge to live and not die. After the struggle was over he triumphantly exclaimed: **“It is finished.” John 19:30** Then Jesus commended his Spirit into the hands of his Father.

Jesus was laid in the grave but only for three short days. On Easter morning he came forth again. He had carried his life safely through a struggle with death, through the agony of hell and through the grave. And what a wonderful life he now led! After his death and resurrection, his body was the same as before the cross (*except that his body now showed the nail prints and the spear gash*). Now Jesus’ body was a glorified body and no longer subject to death. His body passed unhindered through the rock of the sepulcher and through bolted doors, it appeared and vanished at will. It was a life which death no longer could touch. Jesus made good his challenge: **“... I live.” John 14:19**

II

But why did Jesus defy death? Did he want merely to leave behind him an example for us to follow? Does he expect us to take the battle against death, to escape its clutches as he did? No,

when he said: **"Because I live, you also will live." John 14:19** - he meant something altogether different. His word is a word of PROMISE.

What good would his example do us? What would happen to us if we were to wrestle with death as Jesus did in Gethsemane? Where Jesus sweat blood in that agony - we would go under. What would happen to us if death were to attack us with hell and agony as it did Jesus on the cross? We could not last three hours as Jesus did - we could not last three minutes. We would be consumed. No, if Jesus had merely meant to show us by his example what we must do to escape death, there would be no comfort for us in his victory. What we need is a champion who will over-power death for us. And that is exactly what Jesus promised to do when he said: **"Because I live, you also will live." John 14:19**

It was to benefit our death that he led the battle against Satan, and for our death that he became victorious over the powers of death and hell. It was for our life that he brought back triumph from the grave.

Jesus had no sin and therefore death could never have come near him. But Jesus took our sins upon himself. The Lord laid on Jesus the sin and wickedness of our natural status before God. **"Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own..." Titus 2:14** God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us. **"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we**

might become the righteousness of God.” II Corinthians 5:21
Jesus became the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” John 19:29 He was wounded and bruised for our sins, and with his stripes we are healed. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5

That is the first and chief significance of the resurrection of Jesus: God thereby declared the whole world of sinners justified of their sins. Every trace of guilt was removed by the death of Jesus. When God looked at the world outside of Jesus, he saw only a huge mass of sin. But after Jesus had stepped between God and the world – God now looks at the world through Jesus who suffered and died for our sins. Now the world sparkles in brilliant holiness, the holiness of Jesus. In the resurrection of Jesus, God proclaims the whole world as righteous and worthy of eternal life in heaven. Just as Jesus was delivered into death for our offenses, so because of our re-established righteousness he was raised again in glory.

Since Jesus removed our guilt, death no longer has a hold on us. “Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19 But is this really true? Isn’t our country dotted with cemeteries? Don’t we daily meet some funeral procession? Yes, but for those who are in Christ it is not a real death - it is but a sleep from which we shall awake again in due time. Because of Jesus’ death and Resurrection the

Psalmist sang that his soul would not be delivered into hell, that not even his flesh would see corruption. **“... my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” Psalm 16:9-20** Jesus lay in the grave three short days and then he came forth in glory to live eternally in heaven with his Father.

The same now applies to our bodies. The time that the body lies in the grave seems longer to us than three days. But what difference does that make? Before God a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past. When our appointed hour comes then Jesus has promised: **“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19** Jesus will return from heaven and the dead in Christ will arise from their sleep. The dead, corrupt bodies will be changed to be like Jesus’ glorious body. Just as Jesus after his resurrection was immune to sickness and pain and was lifted out of the limitations of this life, was way beyond the reach of death – it will be the same for us. Although we shall come forth out of our grave with the same body which we now have - yet it will be changed and will be called a *“spiritual body”*. That is the promise of Jesus: **“Because I live, you also will live.” John 14:19**

This eternal life is what we believe the departed will have when falling asleep in death in Jesus’ name. It has been my privilege to baptize, instruct, confirm and administer to the departed. It is now exactly one year since his baptism and instruction took place. By the confession of his own lips there was a time in his life when he

was completely severed from his Savior who is the source of all true life. Through a series of misfortunes, sorrows and death, he was most forcibly reminded of the fleeting vanity of this life. And it was through these events, especially the passing of his daughter a year ago, that he was again brought back to his Savior as the source of true life. At the time he could not understand why the Lord would take a young mother out of this life. But through the divine school of affliction the Holy Ghost refined this soul so that he confessed with Paul: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28** The only reason that he would have liked to live a little longer would have been to give his friends and the world a testimony of the wonderful forgiveness, grace and mercy to be found in Christ Jesus the Savior. He felt that he had wasted so much of his life outside of Christ and now that he had him again he realized more than ever that nothing else really counts. But he rejoiced that even this sin of his was freely forgiven and that Jesus received him with open arms.

Oh, friends, how is it with you? Are you drifting away from God or have you already drifted away? Such a life does not deserve to be called life for it only brings a death that will separate us permanently from God, who alone is the fountain of life. In Adam's case the very attitude which manifested itself in such a life brought sin and death into the world. It would do the same to us.

No, Jesus wants us to live our life joined to him and to run in the same groove which his life was cut. Jesus led a life of service and

did not come to be ministered unto but to minister. He went about preaching to people the way of life and rebuked the haughty. He comforted the downcast and faint-hearted. This is the life which Jesus now expects of us. There is much ignorance in the world of spiritual matters and people think that by their good deeds they can earn their way into heaven. Such people do not realize that their whole nature is corrupt and that even their best efforts cannot but be nauseating sin before God. We must tell them that the only way to salvation leads through repentance and the acceptance of Christ's sacrifice our only redemption. We must tell unbelievers of the love of God in Jesus. We must do this by word and example as Christ encourages us to live here in this life with this encouragement: **"Because I live, you also will live." John 14:19**

Finally we can live a Godly life, for Jesus bore the cross for us and has already won the final battle for our souls. Also, Jesus will give us the strength to bear our own difficulties. Through the Gospel and Sacraments and through an active prayer life we will be sustained and remain patient and hopeful in our pain. We know the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.